

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report March 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- Final rule to assist surveillance – VS published the final *Blood and Tissue Collection at Slaughtering and Rendering Establishments* rule in early March. This rule requires slaughter and rendering establishments to be listed by APHIS in order to receive or ship livestock or livestock products or poultry or poultry products interstate. The rule also requires approved slaughtering and rendering establishments to grant VS personnel, or others designated by VS, access to the establishment and space for the purpose of collecting, preparing, and testing samples. Safeguarding Review recommendation #5 calls on APHIS to secure appropriate authority for access to sampling and information needed to implement the National Surveillance System.
- Surveillance steering committee holds teleconference – The National Surveillance Steering Committee held its first conference call. The committee is comprised of representatives from industry, academia, VS, AAVLD, USAHA, and the Department of Homeland Security. Committee goals and objectives were discussed. Safeguarding Review recommendation # 2 recommends utilizing a surveillance steering committee to provide guidance, priorities, feedback, and evaluation to the National Surveillance System.

Response

- Planning continues for next phase of North American animal health test exercises – APHIS personnel met with representatives from the Center for Naval Analysis to discuss the next phase of the North American Animal Health Committee Exercise series. Joint test exercises are consistent with response recommendations in the Safeguarding Review.

Exclusion

- APHIS personnel assist in Asian AI situation – APHIS personnel have continued to host interagency conference calls on the highly pathogenic avian influenza situation in Asia and to assist in coordinating efforts. VS also deployed two veterinarians to Malaysia to join a CDC team in reviewing surveillance activities. Participating in international disease response activities is consistent with exclusion recommendations in the Safeguarding Review.

Laboratory Systems

- National Animal Health Laboratory Network Pilot - Policy and agreement documents for membership of State veterinary diagnostic laboratories in the pilot National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) were mailed to the laboratory directors. The mailing included an explanatory letter, the laboratory evaluation policy document, the laboratory qualification checklist, and preaddressed labels to return the completed checklists to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories. The veterinary diagnostic laboratories participating in the pilot NAHLN are AAVID-accredited laboratories located in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Safeguarding Review recommendations 74, 118, and 119 call for the establishment of a laboratory network.

Veterinary Accreditation

- Practitioners Reference Guide undergoing review - A draft of the *Practitioners Guide for the Accredited Veterinarian* was sent to two AVMA Councils for review. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encouraged revisions to the Veterinary Accreditation program (145, 146, and 147).
- Access to VAS database - A generic, read-only identification system has been developed to allow VS personnel access through the firewall into the Veterinary Accreditation Database. Individuals using the generic ID will be able to obtain information from the system but will not be able to make any changes.

Information Technology

- NAHLN pilot connection released - The first phase of the information technology system connecting the NAHLN pilot laboratories was released and tested the week of March 8th. This first phase provides identified NAHLN laboratories with the ability to submit formatted messages containing diagnostic test results for Johnes and exotic Newcastle disease to the system for distribution to NVSL and other VS source systems. The system allows data integration and creates a messaging hub using HL7 standards. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encouraged the use of new technologies to improve processes (77, 82).

Organizational Dynamics

- Follow-up on front-line survey - The APHIS Management Team continues to follow-up on concerns raised in the recently conducted front-line survey. A subteam has been formed to examine several personnel issues. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations called for enhancing understanding of field level perspectives and improving communications (#s 28, 29, 140).

II. Implementation activities:

The Exclusion, Information Technology, and Organizational Dynamics Issue Groups all met the week of March 29th to continue working on action plans.

The action plan submitted by the Organizational Dynamics/Communications Issue Group on Core Infrastructure was approved by the VS Management Team at its March 2004 meeting.

The Coordinated Response Issue Group is examining how recent Presidential Directives on Homeland Security apply to recommendations from the Safeguarding Review. The Coordinated Response Issue Group will hold a meeting the week of May 17th to continue its action planning.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

